

# Affirmed's win, Alydar's effort leave fans buzzing

By LARRY MILLSON  
Globe and Mail Reporter

ELMONT, N.Y. — They did not disappoint, but that should not be surprising. After all, these two 3-year-old colts, Affirmed and Alydar, have done everything man has demanded from them and gone one step beyond.

Not only did they carry their furious struggle over the three gruelling races in five weeks known as the Triple Crown, a schedule that was destroyed some animals and left others demoralized. Not only did they make each race better than the one before.

Out of it all emerged a Triple Crown winner, Affirmed. And Alydar made Affirmed earn it, in a way none of the 10 previous Triple Crown winners had to, in

Saturday's \$184,300 Belmont Stakes.

In one of the best races ever seen, the two horses slugged it out toe-to-toe for the final few furlongs of the 1½-mile race, urged on by a crowd of 65,417 at Belmont Park.

When it was over, Affirmed had won again, just as he had in the Kentucky Derby at Louisville, May 6, and in the Preakness Stakes at Baltimore, May 20. This time the margin was the closest of the three races, a head. At Louisville, the margin was 1½ lengths and at Baltimore it was a neck.

"This one here, the best race I ever saw in my whole life," said Laz Barrera, who trains Affirmed for Louis Wolfson's Harbor View Farm. "Horses going head and head for so long, fighting it out to the wire."

Perhaps Barrera is prejudiced; the race meant so much to him. Others also were pressed to recall a better race when so much was at stake.

It is the first time there has been Triple Crown winners in successive years.

Last year, Seattle Slew cruised home in the Belmont Stakes to complete his sweep. Alydar is the first horse to have finished second in each of the Triple Crown events.

"I have to say one thing, Alydar is a great horse," Barrera said. "He fights like a tiger and I think that as long as I live, I never see two horses like these ones. I have to give a lot of credit to Alydar. This was a great race. You cannot be disappointed to be beaten because both horses run a winning race."

Perhaps the emotion of the race was best summed up when Affirmed's rider Steve Cauthen and Alydar's rider Jorge Velasquez hugged in the jockeys' quarters after the race. No words were exchanged. They were not necessary.

Affirmed and Alydar have met nine times during the past two seasons. Affirmed has won seven. The colt, a son of Exclusive Native, won't Tell You and also bred by Harbor View, has lost only twice in 16 starts — both to Alydar.

The only horse other than Affirmed to have beaten Alydar in 17 starts is Believe It in last year's Remsen Stakes.

"What can I say?" asked John Veitch, who trains Alydar for Calumet Farm. "It was a helluva horse race. He has stayed strong throughout the toughest grind. He still looks strong and we'll be back to try Affirmed again. And we'll get him sometime, somewhere. Maybe the Travers at Saratoga."

Both horses will be rested. Barrera said that if he has his way, Affirmed won't start again until the Travers in August. "And if it's left up to me I don't run him against older horses this year. This horse has had a very hard campaign and there are a lot of 3-year-old races he can run in. How long can a horse go?"

Barrera also feels the Triple Crown races are too close together, that a month should separate each race.

"A lot of people don't agree with me, but the Triple Crown is too close together. Today, we have winter racing. Today we run every day. The way we're running there's gonna be a time when we're running morning and night. And I tell you something, horses need time. Horses need some relaxation."

There were three other colts in the Belmont, but they soon became irrelevant. Third-place Darby Creek Road was 13½ lengths behind Alydar and fourth-place Judge Advocate, ridden by Jeff Fell of Hamilton and Mississauga, was another 7¾ lengths behind. Fell still had a good day, riding both ends of the daily double.

The time of 2:26 4/5 was the third fastest in the history of the race, but still nearly three seconds off Secretariat's record when he won by 31 lengths in completing his Triple Crown in 1973, the first in 25 years.

The thing about Saturday's race is that it started slowly. The first half strolled in 50 seconds and the first six furlongs was run in 1:12 4/5. Secretariat ran his last six furlongs in 1:14 1/5.

When it became apparent that Affirmed was going slowly on the lead, Velasquez took Alydar in pursuit on the first turn. On the backstretch, it became a match race, but like few other match races in excitement, Alydar stayed outside of Affirmed all the way down the backstretch, around the sweeping turn and into the stretch. Both jockeys figure Alydar actually got a nose in front with about three-sixteenths of a mile to go, but it was hard to

tell on the replay.

Both riders were hitting their horses right-handed, but with Alydar so close to Affirmed, just past the eighth pole Cauthen transferred his whip to his left hand smoothly and started hitting left-handed.

"At the head of the lane I was hitting him on the shoulder and at the three-sixteenths pole Alydar got in front of me," Cauthen said. "I switched my stick to hit Affirmed left-handed and he really seemed to respond good from it. He was digging in like he always does, but he seemed to dig in a little more when he was hit with the left hand. I've never hit him before left-handed."

At the finish, Cauthen raised his left hand as a salute. Although a photo finish was called, everyone knew the winner.

Cauthen was asked if he and Velasquez had said anything to each other, since they were side by side for so long. He said there was no conversation until after the finish. "He said, 'congratulations' and I said, 'thank you.'"

About this time, Cauthen held up a T-shirt someone had given him. The letters on the front said: "Cauthen's Affirmed Triple Crown 1978." It was pink and black, the Harbor View colors.

"I'm just glad it's over," Cauthen said. "Sometimes if I seem a little, I don't know, you all say cold, I try not to be. I'm just trying to do my job."

If Cauthen seems rather cool, Barrera is ebullient. In the emotional winner's enclosure scene, he kissed Cauthen. "I think he deserve

a kiss so I give him one."

Barrera had told Cauthen to go with Alydar. "I would have gone with him (Alydar) from here to China. I don't leave him alone for one minute because I know I have to beat him and he has to beat me. That was the only instruction I gave to Steve, you go with him wherever he wants to go. If he beats us, too bad."

There no doubt will be large offers for Affirmed for syndication as a stud. Barrera said he did not think Wolfson would sell. Barrera revealed that he has a share in the colt, but if he is sold he gets 10 per cent.

He couldn't resist a joke. "If it left up to me, there would be a big chance he'll be sold."

Back at Barn 47, Barrera was reflective. He is a Cuban and has trained in such

places as Mexico City. He did not start out with a horse as good as Affirmed when he first came to the United States.

He was asked if some doors are open to him that were not before. "Yes, they open very easy. It feels very good. But I can tell you something. The doors that used to open before are the ones I like to keep going to now. Those people who first gave me the start in this country. . . . I don't leave them for anybody."

Avelino Gomez, who now rides in Ontario, used to ride for Barrera in Mexico City. Barrera and Gomez still are good friends. "Say hello to Avelino for me," he told a visitor from Toronto.

Then he went to his car. Someone else followed with a blanket of flowers from the winner's enclosure.

## Saunders youngest to win Triple Crown

ELMONT, N.Y. (Staff) — Steve Cauthen, at 18, is not the youngest rider to win the U.S. Triple Crown for 3-year-olds.

According to the American Racing Manual, Smokey Saunders was born in 1918 and thus was 17 when he rode Omaha to victory in the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont stakes in 1935.

Saunders grew up in Alberta, near Calgary, and used John Longden's tack to ride in his first race.

## Cauthen back in saddle

ELMONT, N.Y. (Staff) — One race after the Belmont Stakes Saturday, the Triple Crown team of Harbor View Farm, trainer Laz Barrera and jockey Steve Cauthen were in competition.

Harbor View Farm's Romanticize, ridden by Bernie Gonzalez, won the ninth race, with Thousand Nights, ridden by Cauthen, second and His Squaw, with Jeff Fell aboard, third.

There was a stewards' inquiry and Romanticize was disqualified and placed third for coming out and interfering with His Squaw. Thousand Nights was declared the winner, with His Squaw placed second.

Barrera, who trains Romanticize as well as Triple Crown winner Affirmed, did not seem to mind.



Jockey Steve Cauthen holds whip high in salute to crowd

## Overskate grabs homestretch lead for 2½-length victory in Plate Trial

By LARRY MILLSON  
Stafford Farms' Overskate had not won a race this year in three attempts.

Yet, in yesterday's \$23,900 Plate Trial Stakes at Woodbine, the Stafford entry was the 4-to-5 betting favorite on the strength of Overskate, last year's Canadian 2-year-old champion.

The slight son of Nodouble did not let down the faithful. Ridden by Robin Platts, Overskate pursued pacesetter Forty Bye Two, ridden by Sandy Hawley, down the backstretch. After the pair had done a short-lived imitation of Affirmed and Alydar around the turn and into the homestretch, Overskate, which had been on the outside, pulled away to a 2½-length victory.

Forty Bye Two, which had not raced since May 13, held second by 1½ lengths over High Roller, which had been pinched back on the clubhouse turn and was forced to come wide around the final turn. Portage Bay was fourth.

The 11/16-mile race was the final stakes for colts and geldings leading to the June 24 Queen's Plate, which is

for Canadian-foaled 3-year-olds and is a distance of 1¼ miles.

As in the Plate, colts and geldings carried 126 pounds in the Trial. The time was 1:44 3/5.

Conn Smythe's Lucky Colonel S., one of the favorites for the Plate, did not go in the Trial. He had a tendon irritation last Thursday, but both Smythe and trainer Donnie Walker report that the colt is in good shape now and has been galloping in the mornings.

The equal weights made a difference for Overskate. Because of his success last year, he has been carrying top weight in most of his races this year.

"He ran real good," Platts said. "The weight gets to him and not to the others, that's all it is."

Of course, it was not unexpected that Overskate would come up big for the Trial. In recent years, Stafford Farms always has had something to watch in the Plate. Stafford had won divisions of the Plate Trial five times since 1970 going into yesterday's race and has won the Plate three of the



Gil Rowntree

past five runnings.

"The only reason I worry about this horse at all," trainer Gil Rowntree said of Overskate, "is that he's not as big a horse as I would like. Like last year, Sound Reason (winner of the 1977 Plate for Stafford) was a big son of a buck and you knew you could lay it to him and he'd be able to take it."

"When you get a horse that's a little smaller you have some doubts, but he's (Overskate) a gutsy son of a

gun, he's already proved that."

Forty Bye Two ran a good race, considering that he has been training at Smythe's farm. He was sent there to put on weight and he looked good in the walking ring.

High Roller, owned by Roy Kennedy and Joe Indig, closed well despite his traffic problems and galloped out an eighth of a mile past the finish. "He ran a big race," said jockey Avelino Gomez.

Cool Victor, which finished sixth, was transported in a van from the track after the race. The colt, which had defeated Regal Embrace a week ago, has had a tendon problem.

Stafford is sending his 2-year-old Port Master to Belmont Park in New York for the \$35,000-added Youthful Stakes on Wednesday.

Last year, Buck Mountain went from a victory in the Swynford and was beaten only three lengths in the Youthful, while finishing fourth after running head-and-head with the winner to the eighth pole.

You may have heard of the winner: Affirmed.

## Filly, Dancer a classy combination

# Imagery makes winning look easy

By BEVERLEY SMITH  
Globe and Mail Reporter

CAMPBELLVILLE — Class tells. And the twosome of driver Stanley Dancer and three-year-old filly Imagery have it.

Last night Imagery conquered a field of fillies in the Oakville Trotting Stakes the same way she beat the colts in the General Brock Trotting Stakes a week ago — with consummate ease.

The long-bodied daughter of world champion trotter Nevele Pride had to overcome the outside post position. She did as Dancer sent the filly after Kawartha Mix, who left the gate quickest of all.

Imagery was parked out on the first turn as Kawartha Mix trotted the first quarter in a blazing 28 4/5 seconds, but Dancer's filly took the lead on the rail the first time around and never

relinquished it. Blue Swallow challenged on the outside around the final turn, but once Imagery hit the straightaway, she opened up and sailed home 5½ lengths on top.

Armbr Trudy, a giant daughter of Armbr Jet, was the second favorite. She raced far back for most of the trip, was within 2½ lengths of the leader at the top of the stretch, but had to settle for third place after

Imagery pulled away from the field.

Armbr Trudy has had a history of soreness because of her weight and size. They plagued her last year as a two-year-old — she only made five starts — and trainer Cecil McCallum said her legs are starting to bother her again this year.

The \$17,200 Oakville Trotting Stakes was run as the second race to accommodate Dancer. He had been

scheduled to drive a colt in a stakes race at Frontenac Downs in Kingston last night, but by mistake the Kingston entry book had stated that its race was to be run in the afternoon.

Dancer left immediately after last night's early race to catch a plane to Kingston.

Imagery will be at Mohawk to contest the Celia's Counsel Stakes on June 30 of Grand Circuit Week.

Lime Time, owned by Anthony Chiaravalle of Hamilton, finished second in last night's \$100,000 Battle of Brandywine. The son of Race Time cut out all the fractions with a 28 3/5 first quarter, a 1:27 3/5 half and a 1:27 3/5 three-quarters, only to have No No Yankee, the top 2-year-old pacer in the United States last year, catch him in the last 50 yards.

No No Yankee's final time was 1:56 3/5, a new stakes and seasonal record for a ¾ mile track.

Timely's Best Man was third.

Both Lime Time and No No Yankee are nominated to the \$50,000 Queen City Pacing Stakes on July 2 of Grand Circuit Week at Mohawk.

## Jambo Dancer wins, but not in usual style

By BEVERLEY SMITH  
Globe and Mail Reporter

CAMPBELLVILLE — Jambo Dancer returned to the Ontario Jockey Club circuit in winning fashion Saturday night, but he didn't quite look like the Jambo Dancer that captured Canadian harness horse-of-the-year honors of 1976.

The Jambo Dancer of old liked to leave the starting gate like a rocket, won the Beaches Stakes in 1:58 and beat such calibre pacers as Handle With Care and Albert's Star.

Jambo Dancer made the lead in Saturday night's Preferred Handicap, but he was coming from the sev-

enth slot and had to race parked out around the first turn. Still, Jambo Dancer lacked his electrifying way, and set early fractions of 30 1/5 and 1:02.

Armbr Ollie, driven by Ron Fegan, even had a go at challenging the 6-year-old hay horse, and bested him at the three-quarters before fading to seventh.

Jambo Dancer caught Carlton Hanover in the stretch on the outside and won by several whiskers.

The win was Jambo Dancer's first of the season. He had faced some free-for-all horses on the Ontario Jockey Club circuit in March, but finished well-beaten fifth,

and sixth.

Owner John Grant gave Jambo Dancer a respite for two months and had about a dozen mares bred to him.

In his only other start since his return to the races, Jambo Dancer showed some of the old spark by pacing a 1:59 3/5 mile, although finishing second at Flamboro Downs.

"He's looking a little livelier now — and more alert," said groom Roy Haigh. "Earlier at Flamboro, he was dull."

Time for the mile Saturday night was 2:01 3/5.

Armbr Sabra, a 4-year-old mare given the outside post in a featured handicap,

beat a classy field despite her handicap. Behind the daughter of Horton Hanover were Tarbesto Hanover, Canada's top 2-year-old pacer last year, Ladalia Hanover.

Thamesview Blazze and stakes winners Armstead Jim and Horton's Miss.

The 3-year-old filly, Ladalia Hanover, which had the next-to-outside post, led all the way before being beaten by the older mare by three-quarters of a length. Time for the mile was 2:01 1/5.

Tarbesto Hanover took the back seat for most of the trip and made a belated challenge in the stretch to fall short by two lengths.

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